



LIFESHAPE

PRAYER & DISCIPLESHIP

2 chronicles 7:14

MISSIONS

BLOCK TWELVE

MATTHEW

28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."



IMPORTANT POINTS

1. The mission of the Church never changes.
2. As the world grows, so do our responsibilities.
3. God is counting on us to stay on point and accomplish His plan.
4. What is God's plan for the Church?
 - a. Reach the Lost.
 - b. Teach the Saints.
 - c. Care for the Church in the Earth.

When you were born again, you were considered by God and all of creation as a babe in Christ. Little if anything was required of you. Much like a newborn, life was all about you. Although babies are not necessarily considered selfish, they are nonetheless dependent and cannot provide for themselves but must be cared for continually.

It is God's design that babies grow through stages of development into mature adults. Given time and education each person is designed to take on the greater responsibilities maturity demands. The individual who is able but who simply refuses to grow up, take responsibility, and begin caring for others is a misfit in life. Such are those born again believers who continually cry and whine and complain feeling that life is all about them and their needs. We must encourage and even demand growth and the acceptance of personal responsibilities from ourselves and from the others we influence with the Gospel.

We must grow up in Christ and take responsibility for this kingdom of life.

When we hear the word "missions" most of us traditionally think about going to some foreign country and working with the native population to help them with some need. "Missions" however is much broader than this. Missions includes

any effort we make to fulfill the purpose of the Church. This brings up another question: "What is the purpose of the Church?"

The purpose of the Church is to accomplish the plan of God. God's plan is our mission. The mission of the Church is to:

- Reach
- Teach
- Keep People

... Basically to care about and care for individuals and families while they dwell on earth in preparation for heaven and eternity.

The Church in each generation has been solely responsible to accomplish this mission not only to the unreached in far away lands but also to those who are sitting right next door. For this reason many Churches like ours define their mission efforts as either:

- Local Missions
- Home Missions
- Foreign Missions

Jesus put it this way: "...You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, throughout all Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

We are responsible to care about and do our best to care for everyone in our generation in ever increasing concentric circles from our home to the last home on planet earth. This is the mission of the Church in each generation until the end of this age. This brings us to our Key Scripture for block 12.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW
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We have long believed God has a plan. Suffice it to say this Great Commission contains the only “Marching Orders” God has given the Church. The disciples of that day received these orders as an assignment. Their duty was no different than the responsibility which is laid upon every disciple in each generation since. Their mission was to reach, teach, and keep their generation with the love of God and for the cause of Christ ... so is ours!

The Old Testament covers a period of about 4000 years, give or take a few. It is a picture of God working in generation after generation to ultimately bring Messiah to a lost and dying world. The New Testament however covers only a period of about 40 years, from about AD27 or thereabouts when Jesus called His first disciple to about AD67 at which time the Apostles Peter and Paul were already off the scene and the New Testament was for the most part completed.

The New Testament gives the testimonial account of what 12 boys did in only 40 years. Those 12 boys, minus Judas Iscariot and plus Paul the Apostle, carried the Gospel of Jesus and planted Churches in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Philippi, Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Laodicea, Corinth, Colosse, the regions of Galatia, Athens, Thessalonica, Pergamos and Rome just to name a few. These 12 boys took their assignment seriously and in only 40 years they took the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their whole known world and not one of them even owned a bicycle.

The Great Commission became their mission and their purpose was to accomplish the plan of God. They felt personally responsible to do God's will. They were what we call "Missions-Minded" Believers working in a "Missions-Minded" Church ... is there any other kind?

One of the greatest challenges faced by the Church in every generation is to stay on point. The devil would love to distract us, detour us, derail us and thereby render us ineffective. The devil cares less for who is running the governments of this world and their plans than he does about who is running the Churches and their plans. The Church must stay on point, committed to its mission.

The Church, not the governments of this world, is the hope God has of accomplishing His plan. The work of the Church cannot be accomplished, however, unless individual Born Again Believers take a personal interest in and shoulder a personal responsibility for the mission of the Church.

Communities and Countries which were reached with the Gospel of Christ by the first generation Church 2000 years ago must be re-reached, taught, and cared for in every generation since. You see, sinners are born every day and before we can ever reach that proverbial last house in the world for Christ we must also reach every other house in the world in each generation. This is why it is so necessary to not just evangelize countries and communities but rather insure that we are raising up Church families everywhere we go ... even within our own neighboring communities.

The population of the world is increasing each year and along with each increase our responsibility to establish more Churches grows as well. The world's oldest surviving ancient census, the Han Dynasty, counted its people to determine revenues and military strength in each region. This census taken

in AD2 confirmed 57,671,400 people living in China. Even in the first century, China accounted for a huge portion of the world's overall population which at that time is estimated to be about 200,000,000.

In the first century Rome and Alexandria boasted a population of near 1 million each and we estimate Jerusalem to have about 25,000 permanent residents, not counting the extra 100,000 attending the yearly feasts on occasion. In essence, by the standards of the growing world population today, there simply weren't as many people to reach, teach, and keep in the first century ... but the mission of the Church was the same.

It was not until the 1800's that the world population finally reached 1 billion people. In 1960 the number had grown to 3 billion and by late 2011 that number had more than doubled to reach 7 billion. Within one generation, my generation, the mission of the Church has increased by more than 250 percent. Chances are we will see our responsibilities triple before we pass the baton and yet many people wonder why we are so driven to plant local Churches and do world missions. God is simply trying to keep up and you are His vehicle of choice.

NOTES
